



An tÚdarás Árachas Sláinte
The Health Insurance Authority

Health Insurance in Ireland

Market Report 2024



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

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SUMMARY

HEALTH INSURANCE DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS



1.3%
Percentage increase in number of people with health insurance since 2023



46%
Percentage of people with health insurance



2.52 million
number of people with health insurance



Decrease in numbers of **children insured**



18-39
Age group with the lowest level of health insurance coverage

HEALTH INSURANCE PLANS



338
number of plans



15
number of new plans introduced by insurers



27
Number of plans retired by insurers



50%
of people on one of 32 plans



68%
Percentage of people with restricted orthopaedic plans

PRICES



12.2%
The average change
in the price of
individual plans



€1,740
The average
premium



People over 65 are
paying on average
44% more



€3.6 billion
Health insurers total premium income

CLAIMS AND HOSPITAL DAYS



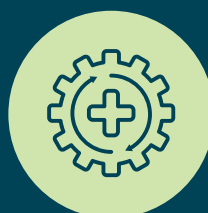
6%
Percentage claims
have increased by
since 2023



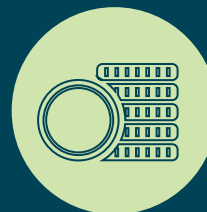
Increasing
private hospital
and other claims



Decreasing
public hospital
claims



Increasing
number of
day claims compared
to overnight stays



1.66 million
treatment days
claimed – 3% less
than 2023

You can find more information on www.hia.ie

SOME FACTS ABOUT THE IRISH HEALTH INSURANCE MARKET

- The Health Insurance Authority (HIA) is an independent statutory body that regulates the private health insurance market in Ireland. We have a number of functions, including ensuring that consumers are informed when they make decisions about health insurance.

- Health insurance in Ireland is based on 4 main principles:



- **Community rating:** the cost of health insurance is based on services and treatments not your medical history, your previous claims or your age.
- **Open enrolment:** guarantees the right to buy any health insurance product on the market.
- **Lifetime cover:** guarantees the right to renew a policy.
- **Minimum benefits:** legislation specifies the minimum level of cover that an inpatient health insurance contract must include.

- Community rating is supported by the payment of stamp duty on each health insurance contract purchased.

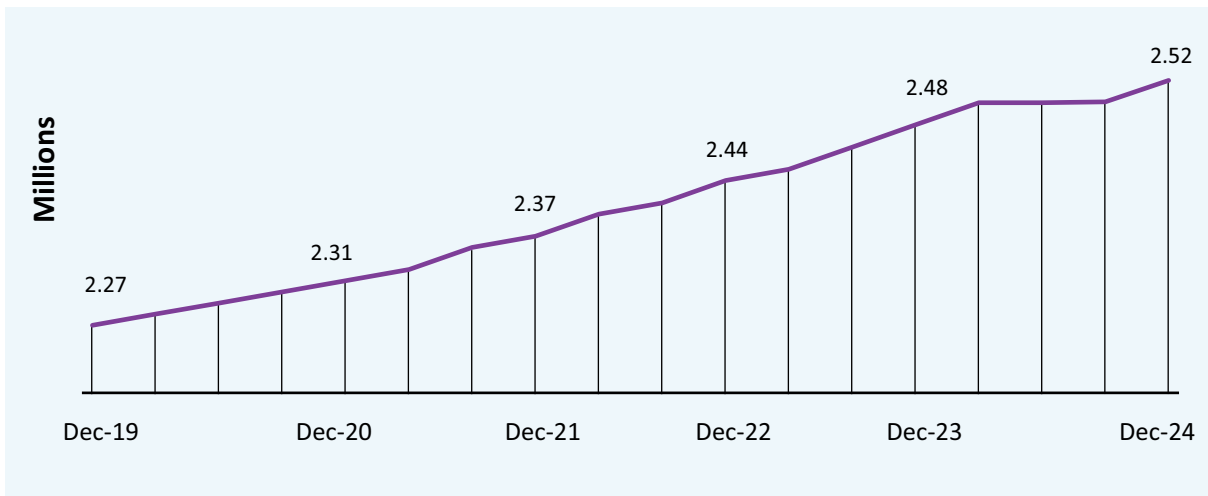
- Lifetime Community Rating (LCR) was introduced in May 2015. LCR requires people aged 35 and over taking out inpatient health insurance for the first time to pay a loading of 2% per year, for up to 10 years. If you have a break in cover of more than 13 weeks you might have a loading when you take out health insurance again depending on how many years you have held insurance in the past.

- Currently, there are four commercial health insurance companies selling inpatient private health insurance operating in the Irish market: *Irish Life Health (ILH)*, *Laya Healthcare (Laya)*, *Level Health*, and *Vhi Healthcare (Vhi)*. These are open to anybody who wishes to purchase health insurance. There are also Restricted Membership Undertakings (RMUs), and these provide health insurance for their members only.

- There are two types of cover: advanced and non-advanced. Non-advanced provides a basic level of cover. Essentially, non-advanced plans provide a minimum of semi-private treatment in a public hospital. Advanced plans have varying levels of cover, but the minimum includes a semi-private room in a private hospital. The stamp duty is different for non-advanced and advanced plans, with the latter being higher.

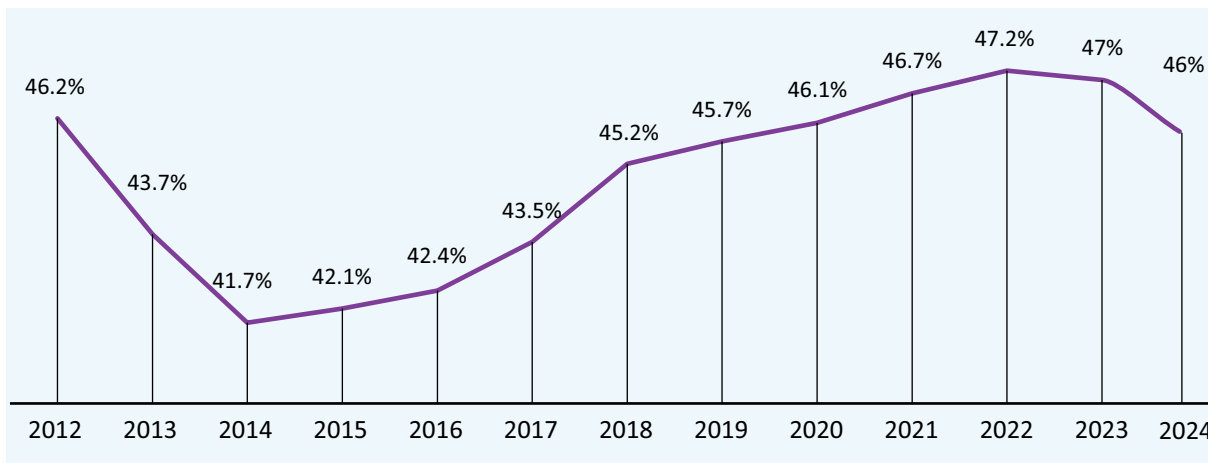
HEALTH INSURANCE LANDSCAPE: DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS

Health insurance coverage continues to grow; however, the growth is slowing. At the end of 2024, **2.52 million** people had health insurance, which is a **1.3%** increase on December 2023. The slowing increase in the number of people with health insurance could be cost related. The HIA’s consumer survey (2023) concluded that the primary reason for people not having health insurance in Ireland, or for no longer having it, is related to affordability (HIA, 2023). Price increases throughout 2024 and the inflationary impact on people’s day-to-day living expenses, have led the HIA to believe that increased cost is a key factor for the slowing growth in the number of people with health insurance in Ireland.



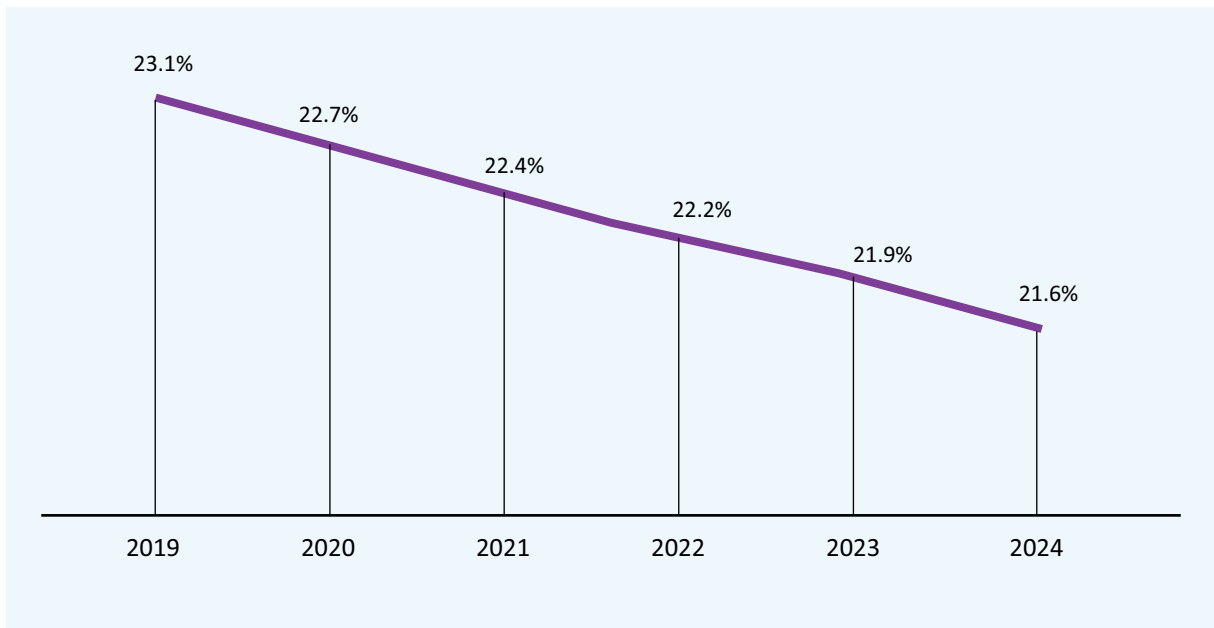
GRAPH 1: Number of people with health insurance

In 2024, nearly half of the population in Ireland (**46%**) had health insurance. It is important to note that the reason for the decrease from 2022 to 2024 is because there was a significant increase in the total population living in Ireland calculated from the CSO’s census results. For this reason, the overall population with health insurance percentage figure has decreased, however the number of people with health insurance continues to rise.



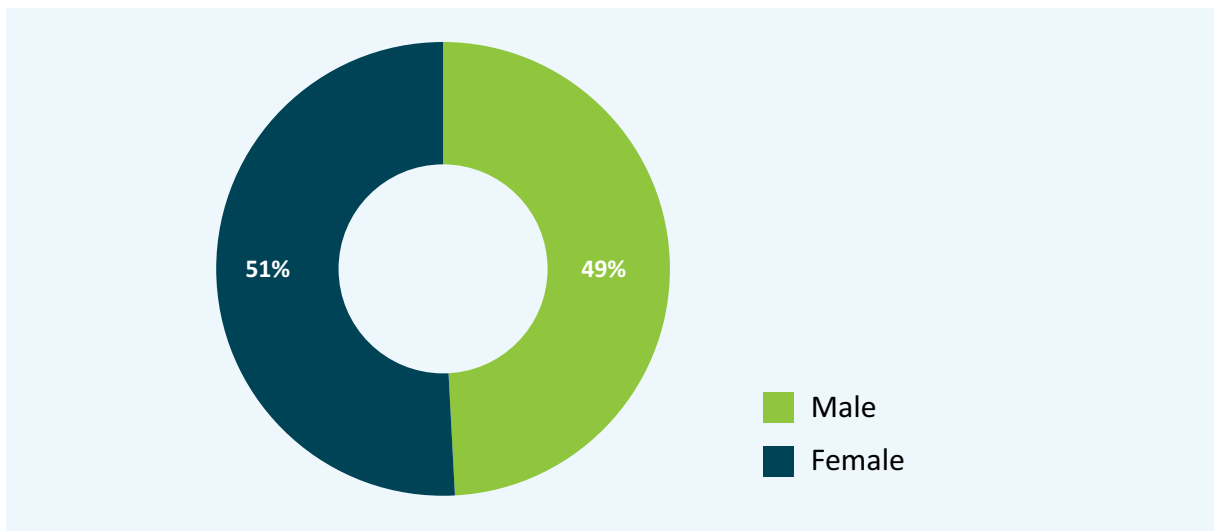
GRAPH 2: Yearly average percentage of population insured

The percentage of the insured population that are children has been declining in the last few years. In 2024, the number of children insured continued this downward trend, and the average percentage stands at **21.6%**.



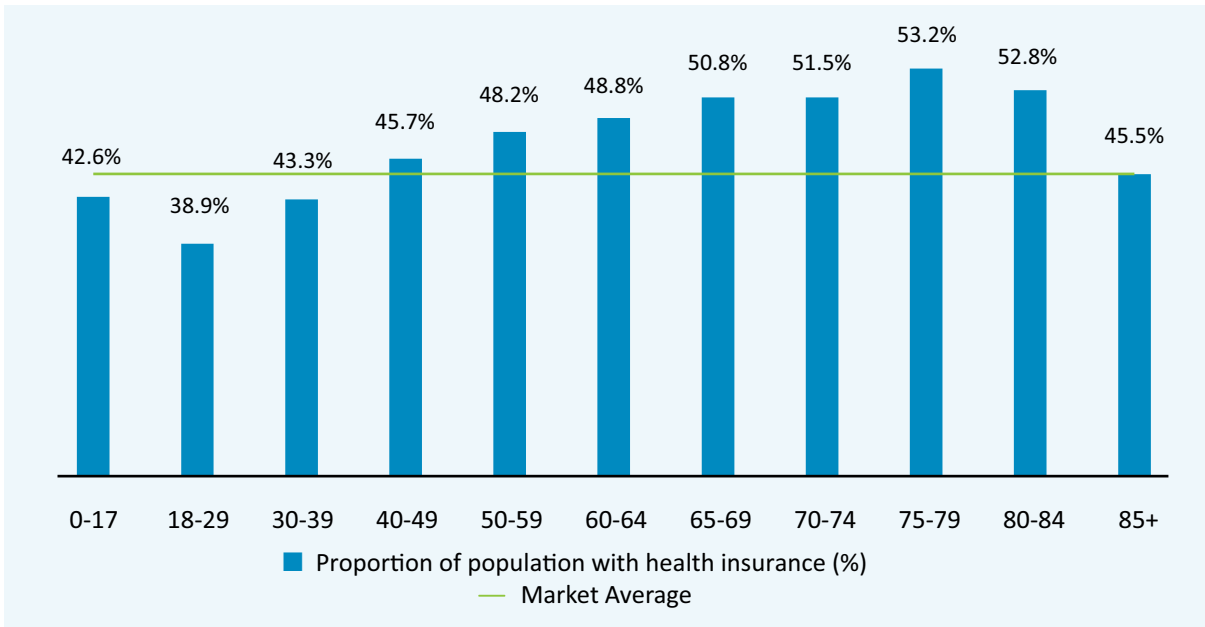
GRAPH 3: Yearly average percentage of children insured

Slightly more women (**51%**) took out health insurance than men (**49%**), which remains consistent with 2023.



GRAPH 4: Percentage of males and females with health insurance in Ireland

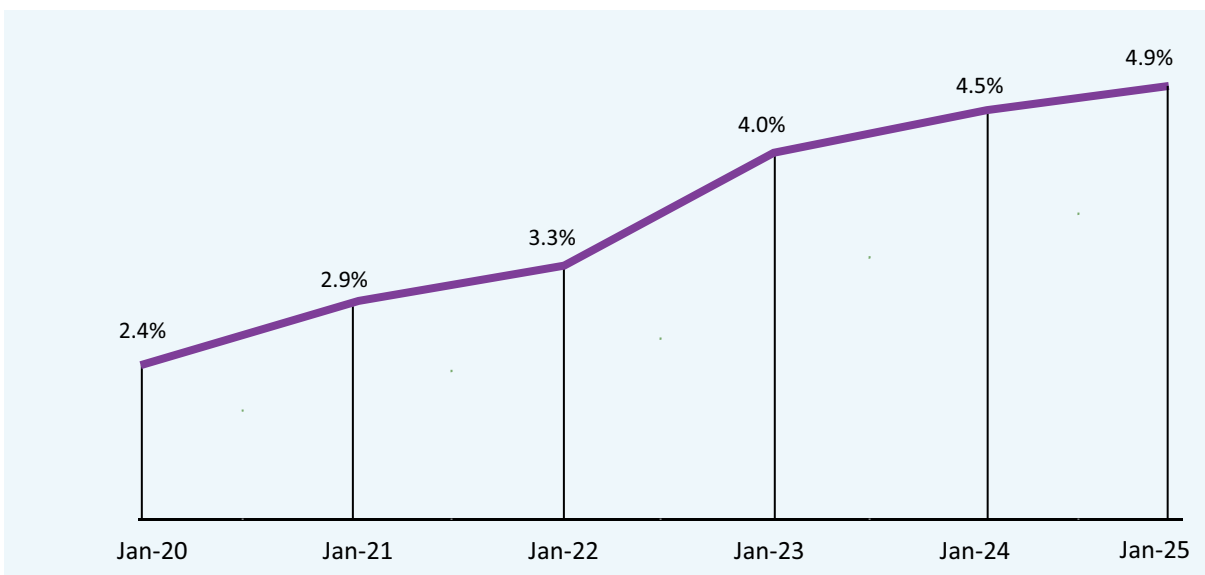
When comparing age groups, we can see that those aged **18-39** years old have lower percentages insured compared to the average across all age groups (average is **45%**). Meanwhile those aged **65-84** have higher percentages insured (greater than 50%).



GRAPH 5: Market penetration by age

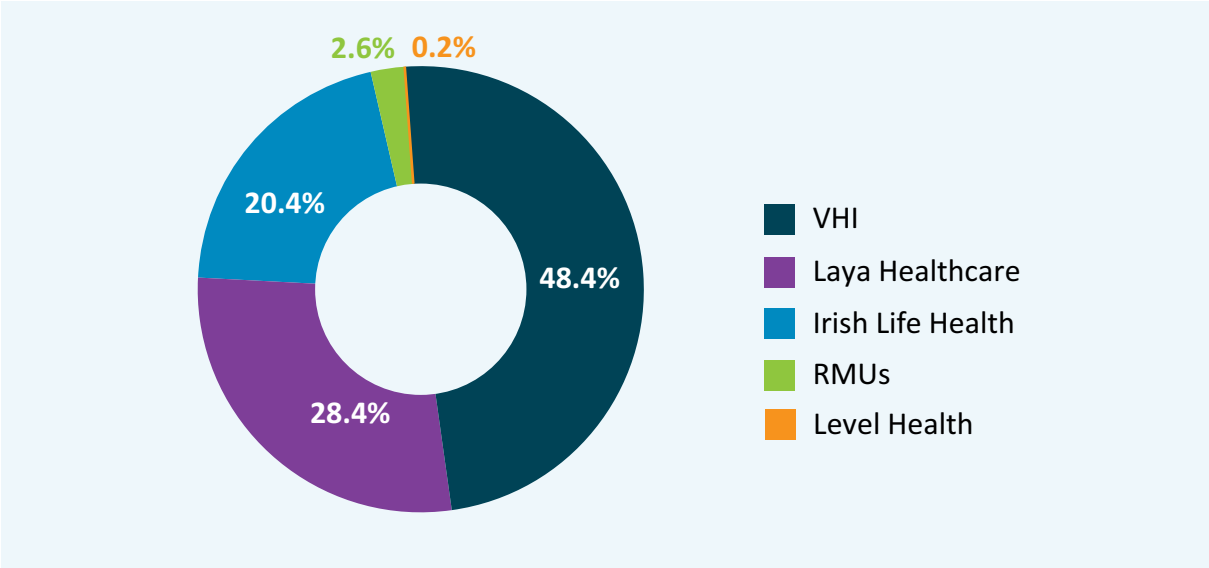
Lifetime Community Rating (LCR) loadings were introduced in 2015 for new customers taking out health insurance. It was introduced to encourage people to join the health insurance market at a younger age. This is where a loading applies to the gross premium for new customers aged 35 and over. The loadings start at 2% at age 35, increasing by 2%, up to a maximum loading of 70% for ages 69 or older.

The percentage of people paying LCR loadings has increased year on year. Currently nearly **5%** of the insured population (**119,828** people) are paying a loading on their health insurance premium. The loading is payable for a maximum of 10 years, and 2025 will see the end of loadings for some policyholders.



GRAPH 6: Percentage of insured persons paying LCR loadings

The end of 2024 saw Level Health enter the health insurance market. Since launching in November 2024, Level Health has gained **0.2%** market share (this is a share from November to the end of December 2024). Vhi continues to have the largest market share and ended the year at **48.4%**. Laya Healthcare continued to increase its market share in 2024 and finished the year at **28.4%**. Irish Life Health remains steady at **20.4%**, and RMUs at **2.6%** (please see page 2 for RMUs definition).



GRAPH 7: Percentage market share at the end of 2024

The table below reveals that while Vhi has the largest market share, Laya Healthcare has seen the largest annual increase at 2.9%. Level Health has not been included below as it launched during the last quarter of 2024.

	IRISH LIFE HEALTH	LAYA HEALTHCARE	RMUS	VHI	TOTAL
CHANGE LAST QUARTER	-930	-883	57	2,228	4,900
PERCENTAGE	-0.2%	-0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%
CHANGE 12 MONTHS	5,185	20,433	-659	2,450	32,537
PERCENTAGE	1.0%	2.9%	-1.0%	0.2%	1.3%

HEALTH INSURANCE PLANS

At the end of 2024, there were **338** active inpatient plans: **305** advanced and **33** non-advanced plans. In 2024, **27** plans were retired, and **15** new plans were introduced (ten of these were from the new entrant Level Health). The number of people on advanced and non-advanced plans has remained largely steady with **92%** of customers on **advanced** plans and **8%** on **non-advanced** plans (for a definition of advanced and non-advanced plans please see page 2).

50% of people with health insurance are on one of **32** plans. Therefore, the choice between plans is concentrated even though there are **338** plans in the market.

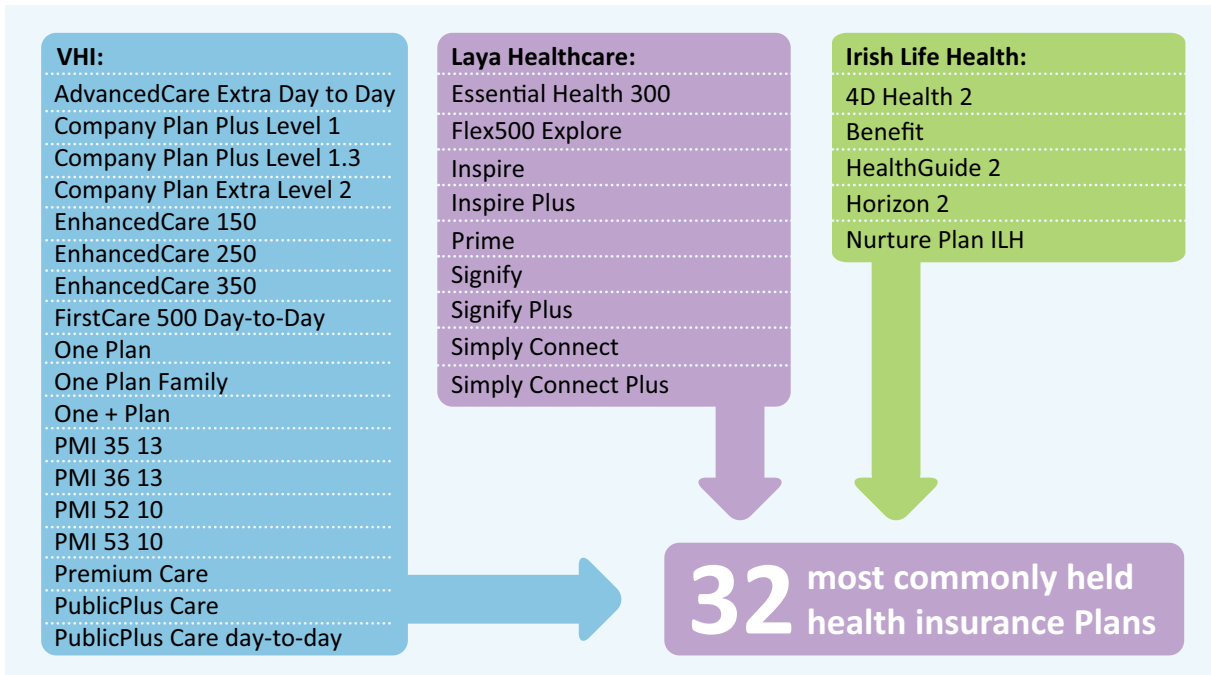



FIGURE 1: The 32 most purchased health insurance plans at the end of 2024 (per insurer in alphabetical order)

29% of people with health insurance are on one of the five most purchased plans for each health insurer (20 plans in total between all four health insurers providing inpatient plans). The five most purchased plans (in alphabetical order) for all four health insurers at the end of 2024 are as follows:

IRISH LIFE HEALTH:				
4D Health 2	Benefit	HealthGuide 2	Horizon 2	Nurture Plan ILH
Adult price €1,939	Adult price €1,376	Adult price €1,678	Adult price €1,781	Adult price €1,542
LAYA HEALTHCARE:				
Essential Health 300	Inspire	Inspire Plus	Simply Connect	Simply Connect Plus
Adult price €1,489	Adult price €1,509	Adult price €1,633	Adult price €1,992	Adult price €2,144
LEVEL HEALTH:				
Plan A	Plan B 300	Plan C	Plan C Day to Day	Plan D
Adult price €557	Adult price €1,062	Adult price €1,378	Adult price €1,588	Adult price €2,536
VHI:				
Company Plan Plus Level 1	Company Plan Plus Level 1.3	One + Plan	PMI 35 13	Public Plus Care day-to-day
Adult price €1,872	Adult price €1,700	Adult price €1,588	Adult price €1,784	Adult price €590

*These are adult prices as of 3rd March 2025. These prices have been rounded to the nearest euro.

Common features for most of these plans include:



PUBLIC HOSPITAL WITH SEMI/PRIVATE ROOM

€20-€50 EURO BACK OR 50-75% BACK PER VISIT ON GP FEE AND/OR FREE ONLINE GP

PRIVATE HOSPITAL WITH SEMI/PRIVATE ROOM & EXCESSES FROM €50-€300

€40-€150 OR 50-75% BACK ON CONSULTANT FEE

JOINT REPLACEMENT NOT FULLY REIMBURSED BY INSURER

An option available to people taking out health insurance is to restrict cover. Plans with **restricted cover** typically include an excess, generally speaking **the larger the excess the lower the premium**. There are 3 types of restricted cover:

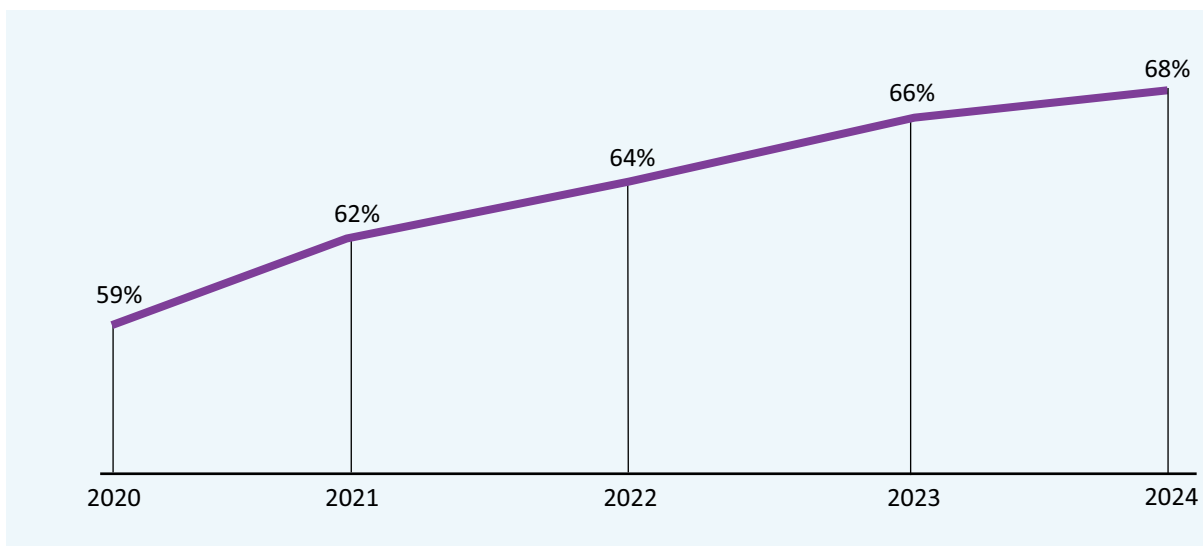
Restricted cover in public hospitals	Restricted cover in private hospitals	Restricted cover on some joint replacement and eye procedures
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ These plans limit the number of public hospitals covered, and these plans tend to be cheaper.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ These plans either limit the number of private hospitals covered or charge an excess for using them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ These plans do not cover the full cost of the procedure, and these tend to have lower premiums than those without restrictions.



12.2%
The average
price increase
of individual
plans

50%
of people
on one of
32 plans

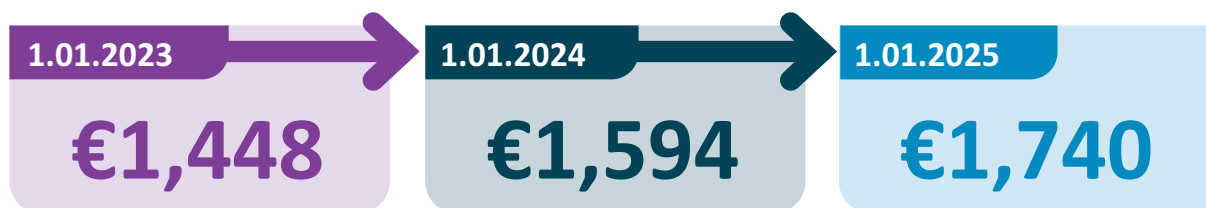
Plans with restricted joint replacement and eye procedures have increased in popularity over the years, and this trend has continued. In 2024 **68%** of people with health insurance have a plan with restricted joint replacement cover. **75%** of **under 65s** are on such a plan, whereas only **36%** of over **65-year-olds** are on a plan that has restricted joint replacement cover. This is one of the main reasons why older people with health insurance are paying more than younger people.



GRAPH 8: Percentage of people with restricted joint replacement cover

PRICES

The cost of health insurance has **increased** compared to last year. The average of the premiums paid by adult members was **€1,740**.



People over 65 years old are still paying on average **44%** more for health insurance as they tend to be on plans with higher cover, in particular for orthopaedic procedures.

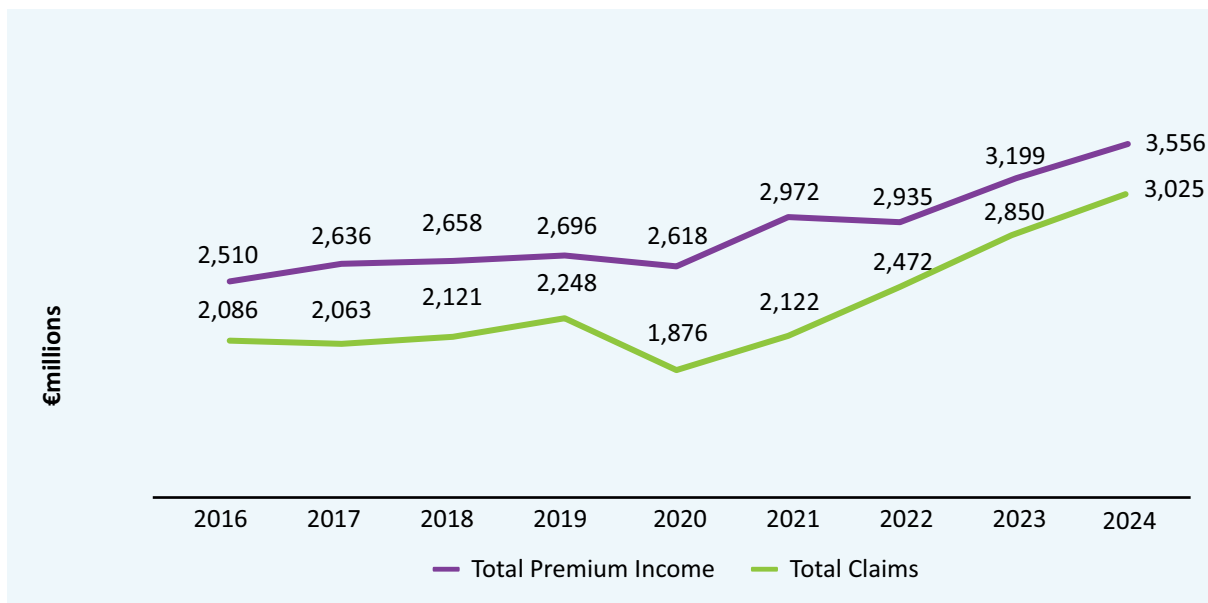
	Average Premium – 1 Jan 2024			Average Premium – 1 Jan 2025		
	<65	>=65	Difference	<65	>=65	Difference
Market	€1,490	€2,136	43%	€1,648	€2,367	44%

In 2024, the average change in the price of individual plans was an increase of **12.2%**. Price changes vary from plan to plan and ranged from **-7.3% to 25.6%** (this is valid for the period 1st January 2024 to 1st January 2025).

	Average price change (%)	Range
Irish Life Health	10%	-2.2% to 18.3%
Laya Healthcare	17.3%	0% to 25.6%
Vhi	9.3%	-7.3% to 18.6%
Level Health	-	-
Market	12.2%	-7.3% to 25.6%

CLAIMS PAID BY HEALTH INSURERS TO CONSUMERS

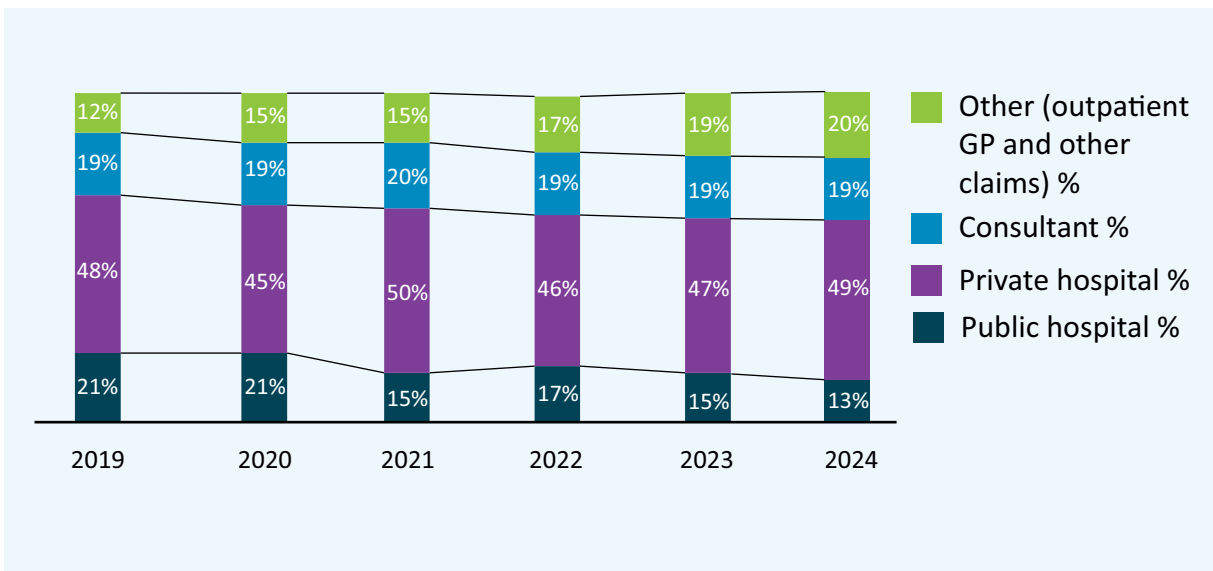
Total premium income has increased over the previous 12 months and now stands at **€3.6 billion**. This can be attributed to the price increases on premiums that insurers have implemented at various points since the start of 2023 that continued throughout 2024, and the moderately increasing numbers purchasing health insurance during the last 12 months. The total level of claims paid by insurers in 2024 rose by **6%** on 2023. Interestingly the rate of increase in claims has slowed; in 2022-2023 claims increased by 15%.



GRAPH 9: Total premium income versus total claims paid by health insurers 2016-2024

When you receive private healthcare treatment that is covered by your insurance, your insurer must pay the public hospital system, private hospitals, individual consultants, GPs and other providers of outpatient services. Payment for hospital treatment is usually paid directly by the insurer to the hospital and consultant, while consumers usually pay out of pocket for outpatient treatment then make a claim to the insurer for reimbursement, if applicable.

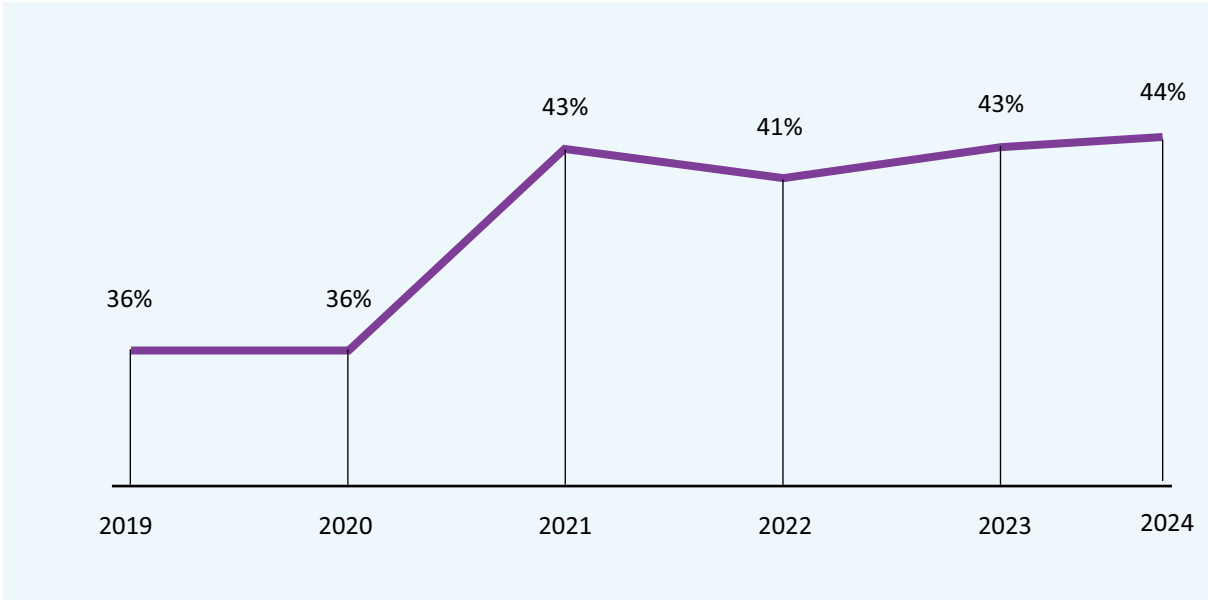
In 2024, claims for treatment in **private hospitals** were 49% (up slightly from 47% in 2023). Meanwhile claims for **public hospitals** have decreased to **13%** in 2024 (from 15% in 2023). Claims for **consultants** remains the same as last year (**19%**), and claims for **Other (includes outpatient, GP, and other claims)**, has increased slightly to **20%** (from 19% in 2023). Consequently, in 2024 there continues to be a downward trend in payments to public hospitals, while private hospitals and the “other” category that comprises outpatient, GP and other claims from outside the hospital setting continued an upward trend.



GRAPH 10: Trends in claims paid by health insurers for hospital and other treatment (2019-2024)

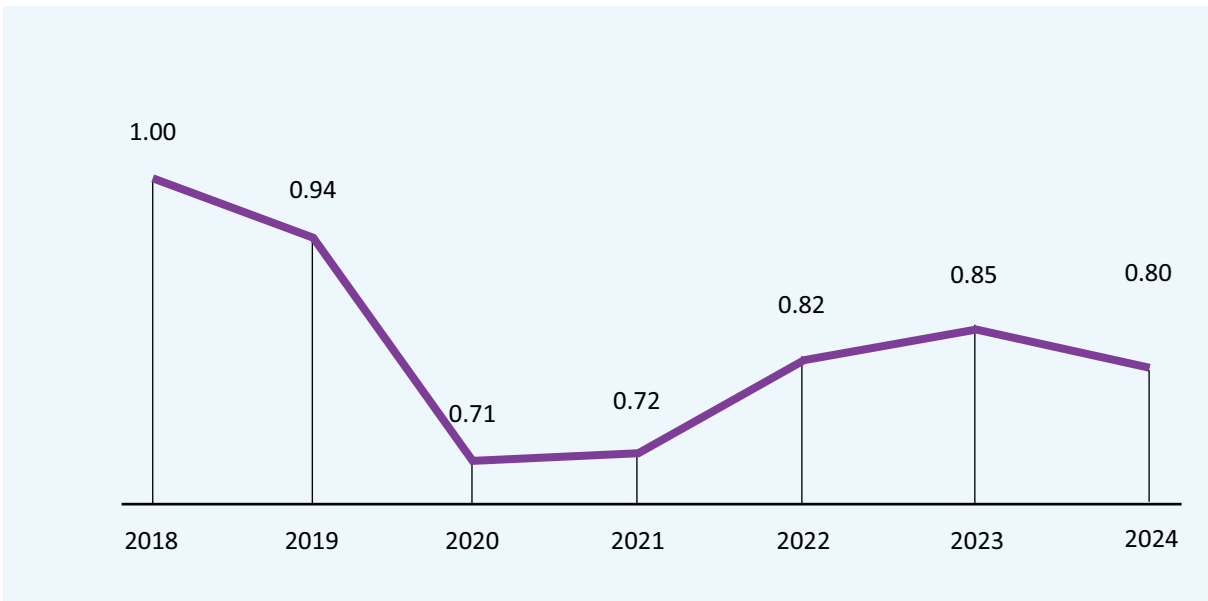
HOSPITAL INPATIENT DAYS

In 2024 claims were paid in respect of **1.66 million** hospital treatment bed days (this includes both day and overnight stays). This is a **3%** decrease on 2023 where **1.71 million** hospital days were claimed. **44%** of total hospital days were day cases. There is a growing trend in day rather than overnight admissions being claimed.



GRAPH 11: Day admission claims as a percentage of hospital treatment bed days

Furthermore, the average number of treatment days per insured person has reduced in 2024.



GRAPH 12: Average treatment days per insured person (2018-2024)



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